

# Food Shortages Not New to World

By Ferdie J. Deering

As far back as history goes, part of the world's people have had less to eat than they needed or wanted. Famine and undernourishment are not new, but they have recently been discovered by extremists looking for a new drum to beat.

Newspapers and magazines are amply supplied these days with discussions of the very real and very urgent need for more food to keep up with the world's growing population. Most of these articles are factual, but a good many "bubbleheads" are being quoted, too. Readers need to be alert to detect the differences.

The basic problem is that in most nations the people are more proficient at producing children than they are at producing food.

At the present rate of gain, exceeding 2 per cent a year, it is calculated that the earth's population of 3.5 billion could double in 30 years. Unfortunately, population increases are lowest in developed countries, which might be able to afford them, and highest in underdeveloped countries which can't.

This has given rise to the idea of a world food reserve, being strongly advocated by the United Nations-related FAO and a number of other organizations. It sounds great, until it is noted that the putting-in will be done by the United States and two or three other producing nations, while about 40 to 60 other countries would do the dividing up and taking out, with payment perhaps.

The international granary idea is advanced as a great moral responsibility

that rests upon the producing nations, including the U.S.A., but it is not very specific about the moral responsibility that recipients might have.

It is true that encouragement is being given in many countries to birth control and a number of efforts are making gains toward higher food output, in spite of drought, floods and failures.

The "Green Revolution" that had been counted on to boost world food output has accomplished less than had been expected, but it has helped. Better crop varieties and hybrids reach their potential only if they are supplied with ample plant nutrients and moisture, as well as management to control plant diseases and pests, and to cultivate and harvest at the right times.

Most underdeveloped countries are short on these items, as well as fuel, transportation, storage, processing and marketing facilities. Traditional farmers often have difficulty changing their methods.

Americans have always shared their abundance generously with those in need, and undoubtedly will continue to do so, but

those who advocate turning over control of our commodities to an international body likely to be dominated by unfriendly governments can only be regarded as superficial thinkers.

Earl L. Butz, secretary of agriculture, points out that Uncle Sam has for a long time, in a sense, managed the residual food inventory for the world by maintaining government-held stocks that functioned as the commercial reserves for the American food industry, for the grain trade, and for other nations.

"But those days are about over," Butz says. The U.S.A. no longer holds huge grain stocks, and the world needs to develop other systems for maintaining reserves. That is what is being attempted in the world food reserve plan, but as presented good old Uncle Sam would still be the principal source of supply.

The kind of thinking that is being applied to the problem may be illustrated by the Harvard nutritionist who suggests that the same amount of food that is feeding 210 million Americans would feed 1.5 billion Chinese "on an average Chinese diet." He doesn't say that all Americans should go on "an average Chinese diet," but

he does say "there will have to be a change in our diet."

The chairman of the Overseas Development Council proposes that we give \$15 billion to 40 poorer nations and then each American give up one hamburger per week to allow more sales.

Not the least of the frothy ideas comes from a University of Wisconsin professor who notes that the American food system is immensely energy-intensive and concludes that "even the developed countries will have to find ways of using more labor and less energy in their food production."

He fails to observe that the countries that are eating well use more mechanization and less labor,